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REPLY.—No Protestant, or, indeed, any one in his right mind, can conceive that anything can be a *duty*—can be commanded by God to be done—which is, strictly speaking, “impossible”—that is, absolutely out of a man’s power to do. To talk of its being a man’s duty to go to the field of battle and fight for his country, if he were a bed-ridden cripple; or his duty to relieve the poor, if he were himself in a state of destitution, and had nothing to give; or to talk of commanding a man to “add a cubit to his stature,” or to fly in the air, would be to talk like a madman.

But though the word “duty” clearly implies “possibility,” Protestants may well be allowed to doubt the possibility of actually finding a man who has performed all his duties with unerring rectitude throughout his whole life, without ever committing even the smallest sin. This at least, however, is perfectly plain, that, supposing any such person *actually* to exist, neither he, nor we, nor any but the all-seeing God, could possibly know this with certainty, or could have any right to assert it. For “if we say that we have no sin (says the Apostle John), we deceive ourselves.” And this would be no less true, even if we *really* were exempt from all actual sin; we could not be authorized to say it, since we could not be infallibly sure of it.

And yet many Protestants, as well as Roman Catholics, are accustomed to speak of such and such a person as a “very worthy man,” as a “man of blameless life,” a “person of exemplary Christian character,” &c.; meaning, and being understood to mean, that such is the general tenor of his life; not that he was never guilty of any fault, small or great, in all his life. And this is the sense in which St. Luke’s description of Zacharias and Elizabeth is most naturally to be understood.

OBJECTION 44.—Many Protestants maintain, that God has not a sincere will of the salvation of all men, but only of the elect; and that Christ did not die for all.

Their Bible, in express words, confutes this error, when it tells us (1 Tim. ii. 3, 4) that God our Saviour will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth; and ver. 6, that Christ gave himself a ransom for all. And 2 St. Pet. iii. 9, that God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. And 1 St. John ii. 2, that Christ is the propitiation for our sins; and not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

REPLY.—The same remark is applicable here which was made in objection 42. Questions about predestination and election are nothing to the present purpose, since, on these points, both Protestants and Roman Catholics are divided among themselves.

OBJECTION 45.—Protestants will have it, that there is no middle place, or middle state of souls, after this life: but that all go straight either to heaven or to hell.

Their Bible teaches to the contrary (1 St. Pet. iii. 18, 19), 20, where Christ being put to death in the flesh, is said, by the spirit, to have gone and preached to the spirits in prison, which sometime were disobedient, &c., which prison cannot be understood either of heaven or of the hell of the damned; for Christ certainly did not go to preach there; and, therefore, it must be a middle place.

REPLY.—Whatever this obscure text may mean (and Roman Catholics as well as Protestants differ very much among themselves on that point), it cannot refer to purgatory. For purgatory is said to be a place where the venial sins of Christians are purged away; whereas the spirits in prison are said to have been disobedient in the time of Noah, before the flood, and to have then despised the long-suffering of God; which was plainly a mortal sin. But the writer of the “Touchstone,” in order to make the text seem to favour purgatory, garbles the passage quoted from St. Peter, in whose Epistle the latter part of it runs thus:—“Which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, when the ark was preparing, wherein few—that is, eight souls were saved by water.”

OBJECTION 46.—Protestants will have it, that there is no forgiveness of any sins in the world to come.

Their Bible declares the contrary (St. Matt. xii. 32), where we read, that the sin against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven a man, neither in this world, neither in the world to come. Which words evidently imply that some sins may be forgiven in the world to come; though that particular kind of sin be excepted from this number, hence follows a middle place, which we call purgatory, because in hell there is no forgiveness, and in heaven no sin.

REPLY.—The most obvious sense of this passage would seem to be, that the sin in question will not escape divine judgment, either in the present world or in the next.

But if it had been designed to teach us that there is such a place as purgatory, and that persons are sent thither who die with sins unpardoned by God, and that they may afterwards receive pardon there, through the prayers offered up for them by their surviving friends, and masses said for them by priests, paid for that purpose, and indulgences sold by the Pope—supposing all this had been true, we may be sure the apostles and

other early Christian teachers would have set forth so important a doctrine very clearly and frequently in their writings.

This, every one knows, is what is done by Roman Catholic priests at this day; and, therefore, we cannot doubt that the apostles would have done the same, if they had known and designed to teach the doctrine. They would have spoken much, and strongly (as the Roman Catholic priests do), of purgatory, and of the efficacy of masses for the departed, and of indulgences; and, in particular, Peter and the other apostles would have dwelt much on the wonderful privilege bestowed on him and his successors, of delivering numberless souls from a place of torment in the next world.

Now of all this we find not one word in the whole of the New Testament—nothing about purgatory, or masses, or the power of the popes, or anything of the kind is at all mentioned by the sacred writers. Hence Protestants infer that all these things were unknown and unthought of in the early days of the Church, and are entirely an invention of man in later ages; and they are convinced, that if any one in Peter’s lifetime had supposed him to possess this wonderful power, and had come and offered him MONEY (as is done to the popes, who claim to be his successors), to release the souls of their friends from torment, he would have been likely to answer, “Thy money perish with thee!” “Do you think,” he might have added, “that if I had the power to deliver thousands of souls from unspeakable misery, I would wait to be paid for it?—to be paid for releasing a few, whose friends were able and willing to afford the cost, instead of at once, and without pay, delivering by one stroke of a pen, ALL souls from purgatory?”

Protestants, therefore, feel assured that no such applications were ever made to Peter, nor any such doctrine taught by him.

OBJECTION 47.—Protestants will not allow, that minute sins, in which the servants of God chance to die, will hinder them from going straight to heaven, or make them liable to punishment from the justice of God.

Their Bible on the contrary teaches (Rev. xxi. 27), speaking of the heavenly Jerusalem, that there shall in no wise enter thither anything that defileth. Now, every sin, be it ever so small, certainly defileth. Hence, we learn from St. Matt. xii. 36, that we shall be accountable, and consequently punishable for every idle word; and from many other texts we learn, that God will render to every man according to his works; and, consequently, will punish all the evil works, though ever so minute, in which a person dies without repentance.

REPLY.—Repentance is (as the original word implies) a change of mind; and if a man be so changed in mind that he is no longer disposed to commit sins great or small in the future state, then he is fit to go straight to heaven. But if he is not so changed, purgatory cannot help him, unless the pains of purgatory produce such a change. Now, if the pains of purgatory are necessary to work such a change, why do the popes and Roman Catholic priests take money to free people from those pains which are necessary to making them fit for heaven? And if those pains are not necessary, why may not such a saving change be wrought by Christ “without money and without price,” as well as by the Pope for money, and at a heavy price? Or, is there any text which says that God will punish all evil works, except the sinner or his friends pay for an indulgence? But the best Roman Catholic divines hold generally that the pains of purgatory produce no inward change of mind at all, but that a man must be fit (in his inward disposition) to go straight to heaven before he enters purgatory, or else can never be fit for heaven. In purgatory, they say, he only pays the penalty of his sins. Now, Protestants have learned from Holy Scripture that the penalty of sin has been borne by Christ, and that all that is required on our parts is to quit our sin.

(To be continued.)

Correspondence.

BAPTISM OF BELLS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

MR. EDITOR.—In reading, in your last publication, an interesting article on the baptism of bells, I was reminded of conversations I had held, when residing on the Continent, with different persons there, on the subject of that strange ceremony, which, in Roman Catholic countries, is by no means uncommon. I learned from them circumstances connected with it which may readily account for a custom so little in accordance with the intellectual enlightenment of the age, being still adhered to by the Roman Catholic clergy. It is customary on those occasions for the curé (parish priest) or the bishop, if present, to invite the richest lady and gentleman in the parish or neighbourhood to undertake the offices of sponsors. They, in return for this honour, feel themselves bound, by etiquette, if not by duty, to present their interesting god-child with a handsome pecuniary donation on the occasion of her baptism. She, on the other hand, with the most exemplary regard for her spiritual pastors and masters, leaves this money altogether at their disposal; so that this religio-comic ceremony can be traced to the same objects as many of the other

practices taught by Rome—namely, that of enriching her clergy. Often have I felt an earnest and affectionate desire that our dear Roman Catholic brethren would open their eyes to this painful truth, and, with candid impartiality, trace one by one the peculiar tenets of their creed to their real source. Then would they soon learn that the system by which they have been long deceived, deserves but too truly the title which the pious Napoleon Roussell has bestowed upon it, “*La religion d’argent*”—the religion of money.

I am, sir, your obedient servant,
A LOOKER-ON.

IMAGE WORSHIP AND MIRACLES.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

SIR.—The crowded state of your pages, and the mass of matter you must have on hand, has, no doubt, compelled you to curtail your remarks on the extraordinary letter of your correspondent “Sidrach” (vol. ii., p. 21). May I be permitted to add a few observations?

I. “Sidrach” quotes the decree of Trent on the subject of “sacred images,” but he quotes only in part. The decree continues—“But because the honour which is shown unto them (the sacred images) is referred to the prototypes which they represent, in such wise that by the images which we kiss, and before which we uncover the head and prostrate ourselves, we adore Christ, and venerate the saints, whose similitude they bear.”—Sess. 25.

This practice, in this very decree, the Council declared to be “according to the usage of the Catholic and Apostolic Church, received from the primitive times of the Christian religion, and according to the consent of the holy Fathers.” And this 25th Sess. winds up with the grandiloquent words—“We all thus believe, we all think the very same: we all, consenting and embracing them, subscribe. This is the faith of blessed Peter and of the Apostles; this is the faith of the Fathers; this is the faith of all the orthodox. Thus we believe, thus we think, thus we subscribe. Amen: anathema to all heretics—anathema—anathema!”

And thus “Sidrach,” we presume, believes, excepting, perhaps, the kissing and prostrating part of the decree. But must he not accept the decree in its entirety, or not at all? And here let me remind him, that we (Protestants) do not kiss, or uncover our heads, or prostrate ourselves before the “statues of Wellingtons, Nelsons, Williams, Georges, and a host of other deified (?) personages.” The parallel he would make does not hold good.

“Sidrach” has, doubtless, a sincere reverence for the “Fathers” and primitive writers invoked in the above decrees. Perhaps, however, he does not know that this very relative worship, so boldly advocated by the “Sacred Council of Trent,” was the identical species of worship, or honour, which the primitive Christians most emphatically denounced. Let me take as examples Arnobius, Lactantius, Origen, St. Ambrose, and St. Augustine, and see how they opposed the reasoning of the orthodox heathen belief with regard to image worship.

Lactantius, about A.D. 300, said—“Beyond all doubt, wherever an image is there is no religion.”—Lact. Divin. Instit., lib. ii., c. xix.

Arnobius, who flourished at the beginning of the third century, and had been himself a zealous pagan before his conversion to Christianity, thus remonstrated with the heathen idolators—“You say, ‘We worship the gods through the images.’ What then? If these images did not exist, would the gods not know they were worshipped, nor be aware of any honour being paid to them by you? What can be done more unjust, more disrespectful, more cruel, than to recognise one as a God, and offer up supplication to another thing; to hope for help from a Divine being, and pray to an image which has no sense?”

Again he proceeds—“But ye say, ‘You are mistaken: we do not consider materials of brass, or silver, or gold, or other things of which the statues are made, to be of themselves gods, or sacred divinities; but in these materials we worship and venerate those gods whom the holy dedication brings in, and causes to dwell in the images wrought by the craftsman.’”—Arnob., lib. v., c. ix. and c. xvii., Leipsic Edit. 1816.

Origen thus strongly condemns, by anticipation, this modern heathenism, in his writings against the heathen Celsus—“What sensible person would not laugh at a man (he says) who . . . looks to images, and there offers up his prayer to them, or, beholding them, REFERS IT TO THE BEING CONTEMPLATED IN HIS MIND, to whom he fancies that he ought to ascend from the visible object, which is the symbol of him (whom the image is supposed to represent).”—Cont. Cels., lib. vii., cxliv.

Saint Ambrose also thus speaks of this heathen worship—“This gold, if carefully handled, has an outward value; but inwardly it is mere ordinary metal. Examine, I pray you, and sift thoroughly the class of Gentiles. The words they utter are rich and grand; the things they defend are utterly devoid of truth; they talk of God—they worship an image.”—Amb. ad Vaten. Epist., cap. i.—xviii. Venice, 1781.

Saint Augustine, arguing against the nice distinctions